

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**RESPONDING TO THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS THREAT:
REHABILITATION OR A SMOKING HOLE?**

Lt. Col NELSON CABOT, JR., USAF
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FUNDAMENTALS OF STRATEGIC LOGIC
THE NATURE OF WAR

PROFESSORS

CAPT RENATA P. LOUIE
COL JIM HARRIS

ADVISOR

COL GARY WEST

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RESPONDING TO THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS THREAT

Thesis

The United States National Security Strategy has a stated objective to “...prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies and our friends with weapons of mass destruction (WMD)”¹. As an adversary for the past 50 years, North Korea has consistently opposed our support of South Korea and Japan, and our presence in northern Asia. In the recent past, they have developed, tested and produced ballistic missiles. They have also fielded weapons of mass destruction, specifically chemical and biological weapons.² As troubling as those weapons are, that threat pales compared to recent North Korean acknowledgement of a nuclear weapons program.³ Nuclear weapons coupled with ballistic missile delivery systems present a new level of threat to the United States and its allies. This new North Korean potential can best be countered by a three-part strategy of aggressive diplomacy, conditional and unconditional engagement and a strong containment posture, all laced with a heavy dose of skepticism.

International Environment

North Korea

Kim Chong-il is an authoritarian ruler, controlling an extremely closed and secretive society based on communist ideology. The central government controls every aspect of society, severely restricting any information flow in or out of the country, and is apparently stable despite the collapse of the economy and continued suffering of the general population.⁴ The Economist Intelligence Unit, hypothesized that Kim Chong-il may still be consolidating his power base within a government dominated by officials from the “old guard.” If that is in fact the case, the fits and starts of North Korean initiatives toward South Korea and Japan may be indicators of Kim Chong-il trying to walk a narrow line between hawks and doves⁵. However, given past

performance and the lack of transparency, North Korean actions are more likely designed to keep the rest of the international community off balance.

Although difficult to ascertain the true severity, by all accounts the North Korean economy remains in a crisis. The CIA World Fact Book estimates the North Korean gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by three percent in 2001.⁶ The North Korean economy is one-twentieth the size of the South Korean economy and the Kim Chong-il government is unable to provide the basic needs to support and sustain the population. As a result of the economic meltdown, the United Nations, through the World Food Program, provides food aid to one-third of the North Korean population, and since the mid-1990s hundreds of thousands of North Koreans have died from starvation.⁷ The largest foreign trade partners of North Korea include Japan and South Korea, accounting for 64 percent of North Korean exports and China, Japan and South Korea accounting for 63 percent of North Korean imports.⁸ The most troubling export from North Korea is of military hardware, specifically ballistic missiles. The primary customers for North Korean missiles are Syria, Iran, Libya, Iraq and Pakistan.⁹

An estimated 25-30 percent of North Korean GNP is funneled into the military,¹⁰ the fifth largest in the world numbering over 1.7 million personnel with an estimated six million reserves. They have over 1700 aircraft and an 800 ship navy. Over 70 percent of North Korean forces are within 90 miles of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and a formidable array of long range artillery is positioned to threaten Seoul which is a mere 25 NM south of the DMZ. The North Korean military has chemical and biological weapons, and recently acknowledged a nuclear weapons program.^{11,12} The Bush administration recently speculated that North Korea possesses “one or two”¹³ nuclear weapons.

Stated North Korean national interests are “...reconciliation, unity and unification...” of the Korean peninsula and recognition by the United States as a sovereign state.¹⁴ Implied interests are the continued survival of the regime and recognition by the world as a legitimate player. The historic pattern of North Korean foreign diplomacy has been to threaten, then agree to reduce the threat if the Allies provide the regime assistance to overcome its gaping shortfalls, thereby ensuring survival. Over the years the North Korean government has signed several agreements, from confidence building measures contained in the 1972 South-North Joint Communiqué, through the 2000 Seoul-Pyongyang Joint Declaration, none of which have been implemented fully. After securing an agreement and some measure of international assistance, the North Korean government abrogated its commitments and continued its threatening behavior. The recent flurry of North Korean diplomatic overtures to South Korea, Japan, Russia and China seem to fit the past pattern, aimed at securing continued foreign aid required for regime survival. At the same time, the acknowledgement of a nuclear weapons program appears to be leverage designed to secure the previously mentioned aid and for world recognition. There is every reason to believe North Korea will continue this pattern of brinkmanship in their future diplomatic efforts.

South Korea

President Kim Dae-jung was elected in part because of his willingness to engage North Korea through his “Sunshine Policy.” The government of South Korea has pursued that policy of engagement with the North, garnering mixed results. After initial success, including limited family reunions, ministerial level talks and agreement to open a rail link between Seoul and Pyongyang, North Korea abruptly ceased cooperation.¹⁵ For South Korea, 2002 is an election year; Kim Dae-jung and his government are under pressure from the opposition on issues that

include his liberal policy initiatives with the North and ensuring continuation of the economic recovery. At the same time, anti-Americanism in South Korea has been increasing, with a general feeling that the United States does not treat the Koreans as equals and South Korea should show more independence in its international policy.¹⁶

The South Korean economy is growing, with estimates of up to a six percent increase in GDP, although it remains vulnerable to a world economic downturn. South Korea is our seventh largest trading partner, and they have strong economic ties throughout the region, particularly with Japan and China, and to a lesser extent with Russia.¹⁷

The South Korean military is 686,000 strong with over 4.5 million reserves, well trained and motivated to protect their country. They are equipped primarily with U.S. equipment, including a capable and modern air force and navy. Their forces are well integrated with U.S. forces on the peninsula under UN command, and arrayed to repulse a North Korean invasion.¹⁸

South Korean stated national interests regarding the North Korean nuclear program are for them to "...dismantle this program in a prompt and verifiable manner..."¹⁹ Their implied goals regarding the nuclear program are reconciliation with North Korea to promote regional stability and ensure continued economic gains. Their foreign policy will reflect those goals through a continuation of the "Sunshine Policy", albeit through a more jaundiced eye, and continued strong ties with the United States and Japan.

Japan

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has dramatically opened the door for relations with North Korea by his historic trip to Pyongyang in September 2002. Koizumi came under domestic criticism for the timing of his trip, critics claiming he was trying to deflect attention

from his declining popularity, cabinet reshuffle and continued Japanese economic doldrums.

Despite recent political gains by the ruling party, Koizumi's position remains precarious.^{20,21}

The Japanese economy remains relatively stagnant,²² but is nonetheless the most powerful force in Asia, with Japanese GDP exceeding China's (the second largest in Asia) by a factor of four to one. Because of Japan's regional economic links, instability and the potential economic disruption in the region would have significant impacts.²³

The military is relatively small in comparison to the forces on the Korean peninsula. They are constrained by the Japanese constitution to the defense of Japan, but are capable and motivated to aggressively execute their mission. They have the potential to contribute significant logistics support to an allied campaign in the northern Asia region.

Japanese stated interest is identical to South Korea, for North Korea to "...dismantle this program in a prompt and verifiable manner..."²⁴ Their implied interests are to regain prominence in the world diplomatic arena after the meltdown of their economy caused a loss of influence. Their anticipated course of action is to encourage continued engagement with North Korea. Japanese objectives are to foster regional stability and ensure their economic prominence in an attempt to balance the influence of China. However, North Korean admissions of the kidnap and subsequent deaths of 6 out of 11 Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 80s, and the existence of a nuclear weapons program may slow unilateral initiatives. They will likely look to the United States to take the lead in establishing a course of action regarding the North Korean nuclear program.

Russia

Russia continues to struggle with its post-Communist trauma. President Putin faces significant internal issues in rebuilding the country's social and domestic fabric, yet Russia still harbors the desire as a former super power to remain relevant in the international arena.

The economy is growing at an estimated rate of 5.1 percent in 2001²⁵ yet remains at risk to any downturn in world markets. Although Russia primarily trade with European partners, it sees northern Asia, specifically South Korea and Japan, as important partners in future economic growth. In a bid to increase trade with South Korea, President Putin has proposed a rail link from Siberia to South Korea, giving them a vested interest in the events on the peninsula.²⁶

The Russian military has roughly 1.2 million personnel, with a sizeable air force of relatively modern aircraft and a navy capable of blue water operations. Their force is equipped with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian military has been poorly funded and poorly maintained. This lack of attention has led to a serious degradation in Russian military capability.²⁷

Russia has not yet stated a position regarding the North Korean nuclear weapons program. Its implied interests are to both offset and influence U.S. power along Russia's eastern border and continued regional stability to allow expansion of trading opportunities with South Korea, Japan and China.²⁸ Because of future economic interests in the region, they will likely continue to encourage North Korean restraint and provide limited support to U.S. led diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation. A fragile economy and weakened military, coupled with adequate assurances of U.S. intentions, will likely keep Russia on the sidelines if the United States and its allies resort to military force.

China

The influence of capitalism on the communist government has changed the face of China in a way that has been beneficial to the United States. However, the Chinese leadership is aging and a post-Jiang power struggle could be a destabilizing influence in Chinese domestic policy, with resulting uncertainty in the international arena. In any case, China has considerable influence in northern Asia in general and some measure of influence in North Korea in particular.

Although the Chinese economy is not as powerful as Japan's, its potential is huge. Northern Asia represents a significant part of China's trade, and it is anxious to expand those links. China does more than 17 percent of its total trade with Japan and imports 10 percent of its goods from South Korea. Trade with North Korea is insignificant compared to the rest of its Asian trading partners.²⁹

China's military is very large, with 2.9 million troops under arms, over 4,900 aircraft and a navy capable of limited blue water operations.³⁰ China's force is equipped with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, deliverable by aircraft or ballistic missiles.

China's stated interest regarding the nuclear weapons issue is "...that the Korean peninsula ought to be nuclear weapons-free."³¹ Due to regional economic ties, China's implied interests are more focused on stability than ideological support of the regime in Pyongyang. China will pursue a policy that enhances the stability of its important trading partners in the region, specifically South Korea and Japan,³² and will at least tacitly support U.S. led diplomatic efforts to achieve that goal. Given sufficient assurances of U.S. intentions on the Korean peninsula, and the economic chaos of a general war against the United States, China would likely

remain on the sidelines if the United States and its allies resorted to a military option as the solution to the North Korean nuclear threat.

Domestic Environment

The domestic agenda is preoccupied with homeland security and the war on terrorism. Current debate is focused on the nuclear threat posed by Iraq and whether a preemptive security posture is an appropriate strategy to address North Korea's WMD program. An associated policy concern is stemming the proliferation of WMD to regimes that do not currently possess that capability. North Korean admission of a nuclear program has raised the specter of inconsistency in the administration position, and opened the possibility for continued public debate over the feasibility of U.S. action in either theater.³³

The economy is still recovering from the recession prior to and following the attacks of 11 September 2001. First quarter growth in 2002 indicates the possibility of a recovery, but the GDP rate of growth for 2001 was three-tenths of one percent, and the economy remains vulnerable.³⁴ The administration has not put the national economy on a wartime footing and does not appear willing to sacrifice the recovery of the domestic and international communities by taking that action. The cost of the homeland security program and associated military expenditures is estimated in billions of dollars and could significantly strain available resources. Regardless, the United States remains the economic engine of the world, outpacing the GDP of its nearest competitor by over two to one.³⁵

The military is the best-equipped and trained force in the world, with worldwide capability to employ conventional, unconventional and nuclear forces. U.S. forces in the region are small compared to the other regional powers, numbering roughly 35,000, but possess unique

capabilities.³⁶ They are capable of an impact that is disproportionately large to their size in a conflict on the peninsula, and can be rapidly reinforced.

Stated U.S. goals regarding the North Korean nuclear threat are to “...dismantle this program in a prompt and verifiable manner...”³⁷ Unstated U.S. goals are a stable and predictable North Korean regime that can be dealt with rationally. National prosperity is inexorably linked with commerce in northern Asia, with Japan, China and South Korea ranking in the top seven of U.S trading partners. North Korean WMD programs are significant threats to regional security and economic stability, and their associated proliferation activities threaten the worldwide interests of the united States. The United States will continue a policy that insists that North Korea dismantle its nuclear program in order to “prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with weapons of mass destruction.”³⁸

Policy Objectives

Short-term U.S. policy objectives should be the immediate cessation of the North Korean nuclear weapons program, the complete accountability of nuclear weapons material and a continued moratorium of their ballistic missile test program. Long-term objectives should be the dismantling of the North Korean nuclear capability.

Means

The means available to address the North Korean nuclear threat are limited by the isolation of the North Korean regime, the capability of the North Korean government to suppress internal dissent through draconian measures and the ability to withstand past international pressure. Coupled with the resiliency of the North Korean regime are the desires of the regional players for stability of the current situation, and limited U.S. resources given the constraints of

homeland security, the war on terrorism and the immediate threat of Iraqi WMD. The United States is not, however, without options.

Diplomacy

Options for public diplomacy include an aggressive campaign identifying the North Korean regime as reneging on previously negotiated accords, specifically the 1994 agreement to suspend its nuclear weapons program. Diplomatic initiatives could include UN resolutions condemning North Korean action, and an aggressive informational campaign by our regional allies highlighting the threat posed by continued North Korean intransigence and disregard for international agreements. The program could also include propaganda broadcasts into North Korea intending to foster discontent with the current regime. Coupled with those steps, the United States could continue to emphasize the threat to the international community of continued North Korean proliferation of WMD in opposition of international norms. Specifically, the United States could encourage all nations, and particularly signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to take active measures against proliferation of North Korean nuclear weapons technology. Privately, the United States should align the regional players with a coordinated approach to North Korea that is acceptable to the United States, emphasizing the benefits to each of the players if North Korea ceases activity and eventually dismantles its nuclear program.

Risks of public diplomacy include the possibility of apparent North Korean acquiescence and subsequent manipulation intended to undermine the allied position. If the North Koreans are successful in dividing the allies, they could have sufficient time to complete the required research, development and testing of an effective nuclear weapon and delivery system. At that point, any subsequent military options envisaged by the United States to reduce or contain the

threat would risk North Korean nuclear preemption. Also, if the North Koreans continued their program in spite of U.S. rhetoric, the United States could appear unable or unwilling to solve an issue we have given great emphasis, with a subsequent loss of credibility on the world stage. The costs to the United States would be minimal compared to the importance of a united regional approach toward the North Korean nuclear program. They could include monetary commitments (depending on the agreement), and some measure of compromise with our allies to secure their support.

Aid

Food aid is one available option to provide continued relief to the North Korean civilian population. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations could provide that assistance. The benefit to the allies of providing food aid is a continued measure of stability for the North Korean government which would reduce the likelihood of it lashing out militarily as a last resort. Also food aid holds out the possibility that the North Korean population will identify the allies as a benevolent benefactor. If that were the case, it could reduce the North Korean popular perception of an outside threat and undermine popular support of the North Korean government. Economic aid is also an available option. Initially it would focus on providing resources to improve essential services, and then focus on rebuilding the North Korean infrastructure to improve the basis of the North Korean economy and ultimately the North Korean population. In the event of a refugee crisis, aid should be available for both China and Russia, contingent on those countries supporting, at least tacitly, the U.S. led policy.

The primary risks of aid are twofold. First, the North Korean government could divert the aid to further its military programs instead of improving the status of the North Korean people. Second, the North Korean government could present the aid to the populace in such a

way that it builds popular support for the government. The cost of food aid is minimal. Conversely, depending on the scale, the cost of rebuilding portions of the North Korean infrastructure as a form of aid could involve large amounts of capital from donor nations. Significant amounts of aid for reconstruction may be difficult to provide in a time when the United States is coming to grips with the potential homeland security bill and regional allies are struggling with their own domestic economic issues.

Soft Power

Because of the closed and secretive nature of North Korean society, the ability of the United States or its allies to influence the actions of the North Korean government through soft power is small. However, one available option is a continuation of cultural and sporting exchanges. The benefits are limited since the exposed North Korean population is very small, but they are a select and respected group that could have a disproportionate impact on the North Korean popular perception of the outside world. The risks and costs of continuing these exchanges are minimal.

Military Power

Political Setting and Objectives. The military instrument could not be used without a coalition of the U.S., South Korean and Japanese governments. In any military action, South Korea would suffer significant damage from North Korean forces, and South Korean bases are critical to the successful execution of military action. The logistics necessary for military action relies heavily on Japanese military involvement and domestic support. The immediate coalition political objective would be the elimination of the North Korean WMD threat to the United States and its allies. The North Korean political objectives would be regime survival at any cost. Russia would likely remain a bystander, sympathetic to the U.S. coalition but not willing to

contribute. China would also remain militarily neutral, with perhaps public rhetoric supporting North Korea, but no overt support of the regime. Coalition action would be constrained by fear of causing either overt Russian or Chinese intervention, or both, in support of North Korea. Other political constraints on the coalition would be the imperative to make the war short in order to maintain domestic will in all the participating countries, and the need to minimize South Korean civilian casualties and physical damage to the South Korean country.

Military Strategic Setting. The coalition would plan and execute a conventional war, with specific objectives to prevent the use of North Korean nuclear weapons. Both the allied coalition and North Korea would attempt to conduct asymmetric warfare. The coalition would use its decided advantage in airpower and mobility to overcome the North Korean mass arrayed along the DMZ, and North Korea would attempt to terrorize the coalition and degrade operations through the use of its special operations forces and by employing chemical and biological weapons. It would be total war, characterized by the willingness of the North Korea to absorb mass casualties to overcome their lack of technology. Conversely, North Korea would be willing to inflict mass casualties on the South Korean civilian population in an effort to break the will of the coalition. Military operations are constrained by the terrain, which limits mobility in many parts of the country and the small size of the country that further limits coalition advantages in mobility. Other constraints to coalition operations are the weather, which could restrict allied application of air power, the need to support the operation with long lines of communication. Timing is vitally important to the success of any coalition campaign. If the coalition required more forces from the United States prior to the initiation of hostilities, North Korea could use that time to either step back from the brink and avert war, or to start the war on its own terms. In the former, the coalition could end up back at square one, with no consensus on the need for

military action and no assurance that North Korea was no longer a nuclear threat. In the latter, the coalition may need significantly more time and effort to achieve its objectives. Finally, a protracted war could erode allied commitment to continue the action.

Military Objectives. North Korean military objectives would be the capture and occupation of Seoul with eventual expulsion of coalition forces from the Korean peninsula. The coalition objectives would be isolation of North Korean forces from their leadership and logistical pipeline while holding the North Korean force north of Seoul. Simultaneously, the coalition would target North Korean WMD stockpiles and delivery mechanisms in an effort to eliminate the threat of WMD. The North Korean centers of gravity are the leadership clique of Kim Jung-il and his senior military officers, and the North Korean army. Elimination of North Korean leadership would likely cause a rapid disintegration of coordinated resistance to the allied effort, providing the opportunity for decisive action and successful termination of the war. Likewise, destruction of the North Korean army would remove the threat of further action as well as having the added benefit of destroying the mechanism keeping the leadership in power. The coalition center of gravity is the will of the populace to continue action in the face of significant suffering. Of particular importance is Seoul and its concentration of population symbolizing South Korean independence. If Seoul fell into North Korean hands, the South Korean morale could be reduced to the point that the government would be willing to negotiate a settlement. If North Korea were able to effectively employ WMD against Japan or the United States, either or both countries may also be willing to negotiate an end to hostilities. Given the nature of the North Korean leadership and the expected character and conduct of the war, the termination criteria would be elimination of the North Korean army as an effective fighting force, either through lack of leadership or outright destruction. The resultant post-war end state

would be regime change in North Korea and establishment of a government that was a stabilizing influence in the region.

Military Capabilities and Vulnerabilities. The North Korean military is large, and its capability is centered on its mass of artillery and infantry arrayed along the DMZ. That force has an advantage over the coalition in both artillery and manpower, and is poised within striking distance of Seoul. The North Korean air force is considered obsolete and would be rendered combat ineffective in a short period of time. The navy is a coastal force that would also be rendered combat ineffective shortly after the beginning of hostilities. The coalition forces have overwhelming superiority in the air and on the sea. The continued improvement of allied precision strike capability coupled with development of weapons designed to penetrate the hardened and deeply buried targets in North Korea is important to the success of allied effort. These capabilities would allow more effective attacks to prevent the use of WMD and destroy North Korean command and control. The greatest vulnerability of any allied course of action lies in the proximity of North Korean ground forces to Seoul. North Korean artillery along the DMZ has the capability to cause enormous destruction to the city proper, and the size of the ground force facing allied troops coupled with North Korean willingness to sacrifice men to obtain their objectives makes the defense of Seoul extremely difficult. The coalition is also vulnerable to the asymmetric use of WMD and to SOF operating in coalition rear areas, on and off the Korean peninsula. Coalition development and deployment of missile defense capability is ongoing and important to the overall success of the war. Just as important is the allied capability to interdict and failing that, overcome SOF forces in South Korea.

Strategic Concept. The North Korean strategy would be to use its ground forces in a frontal assault on Seoul while degrading allied air power and resupply efforts through the use of

WMD and SOF on airfields and seaports. The coalition strategy would hinge in simultaneous attacks on North Korean command and control, ballistic missile launch capability and destruction of North Korean forces threatening Seoul. Execution of the allied effort would likely require a significant increase in available forces in an effort to reduce the risk of tactical North Korean success in employing WMD and threatening Seoul. The risk associated with massing additional forces prior to initiation of hostilities is the likely dispersion of North Korean WMD assets and relocation of the leadership to more secure areas. Those efforts would cause the allies significant difficulty in achieving their military and political objectives. The risk of initiating the war without deploying additional force is the potential of not having enough assets to prosecute the military objectives simultaneously.

Potential Results. The likely outcome of a war on the Korean peninsula would be the eventual defeat of North Korean forces and replacement of the Kim Jong-il government with one more conducive to regional stability. That result would satisfy the political objective of eliminating the North Korean threat of nuclear weapons to our friends and allies. The costs of such a campaign are large numbers of casualties on both sides, significant destruction of South Korean and potentially Japanese and U.S. territory, and economic and social upheaval in northern Asia that would resonate worldwide. However, without unambiguous knowledge of North Korean intentions to preemptively employ nuclear weapons, the cost of the military solution in human and economic terms to the United States and our allies outweighs the risks.

Ways

Given the potential threat of North Korean nuclear weapons to regional stability and the ultimate interests of the United States, its recent admission of a nuclear weapons program cannot be ignored by the United States or its allies. The problem should be approached with hard-nosed

pragmatism based on a three-part strategy of diplomatic pressure, engagement based on reciprocity, transparency and verification, and continued military strength.

Diplomacy

The United States should use the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG)³⁹ as the primary mechanism to establish a coordinated position among South Korea, Japan and the United States. The U.S. position should be an aggressive and public stand that North Korea abide by previous agreements. Once the TCOG agrees on a course of action, it should reiterate Secretary Powell's offer to meet with North Korea "...anywhere, anytime, with no preconditions."⁴⁰ Multilateral negotiations with North Korea should be the desired forum, but the United States should also encourage bilateral negotiations, specifically continuation of the contacts between South Korea and North Korea. The TCOG members should actively engage China and Russia in an attempt to elicit their support for the TCOG position. Both China and Russia have supported the North Korean regime in the past and may have some influence over North Korean actions. A byproduct of those contacts could be a lessening of Chinese and Russian concern over U.S. intentions on the peninsula and in northern Asia as a whole.

The trilateral group should demand North Korea abide by the 1994 accords,⁴¹ specifically allowing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors into the country and providing unlimited access to 100 percent of North Korean nuclear material. North Korea must also stop all work on its nuclear weapons program, taking action that is transparent and verifiable by international agencies. Coupled with this stance, the TCOG should press for a continued moratorium on North Korean ballistic missile testing, due to expire in January 2003,⁴² since the uncertainty of the purpose of another ballistic missile launch is a destabilizing influence. The TCOG should also agree on potential adjustments to the 1994 accords, such as supplying

electricity to North Korea from existing sources instead of constructing the light water reactors. If the North Korean actions to halt their program were acceptable to the members, a concrete and relatively quick fulfillment of the intent of the accords by the allies would be in order.

Once the TCOG articulates its position to North Korea, it should engage the rest of the international community to increase pressure on North Korea to comply. The goals of the diplomatic campaign (both public and private), are further international isolation of the North Korean regime, tempered by the need to prevent a last ditch attack by a beleaguered Kim Jung-il. One method of international coercion could be a significant restriction of trade, targeting non-agricultural items. Coupled with that effort should be an aggressive program aimed at increased international interdiction of illicit exports of North Korean WMD technology. The objective of the interdiction campaign should be the immediate reduction and eventual elimination of a market for North Korean nuclear weapons technology.

Engagement

Material support to North Korea under the 1994 accords should be terminated immediately. In addition, the TCOG should cease bilateral food aid, fertilizer deliveries and tourist travel (a source of much needed hard currency), to North Korea. However, the TCOG should prepare to continue its nonmaterial and UN mandated engagement with North Korea. The South Koreans should be given the opportunity to lead the engagement effort, as they have in the recent past, but within strict TCOG guidelines. The conditional engagement game plan should be limited to government-to-government discussions defining the type of interaction or aid available to the North Korean government given concrete action on their part to comply with TCOG conditions. Specifically, the resumption of bilateral material aid should be contingent on admittance of IAEA inspectors into North Korea and their access to the nuclear material. North

Korean compliance would allow immediate deliveries of food, and the resumption of fertilizer deliveries and tourist visits to North Korea and supplies of energy in the form of fuel oil. A parallel effort should be the implementation of previously negotiated confidence building measures including a hot line between Seoul and Pyongyang and notification of the timing and scale of military exercises.⁴³ Implementation and use of the confidence building measures would show North Korean transparency, and should trigger the resumption of work in the Seoul to Pyongyang railroad. After North Korea renounces its nuclear program, and allows unfettered verification by the IAEA or some other international body, the TCOG should allow limited efforts aimed at rebuilding portions of the North Korean infrastructure.

Unconditional engagement should be encouraged in the form of cultural exchanges, sporting events and expanded family reunions. Although limited in scope, they provide a potentially influential portion of North Korean society interaction with people outside of North Korea. This form of engagement would signal allied intent to allow North Korea a measure of international recognition and is intended to reduce the inclination of the North Korean regime to escalate the situation due to fears of a regime change.

Containment

Diplomacy and engagement will only be effective with a credible threat of the consequences to North Korea if it uses its nuclear weapons program to further destabilize the region. The TCOG must agree on the types of North Korean actions that would trigger a military response (e.g. credible evidence of North Korean intent to strike northern Asia or the U.S. with nuclear weapons) and be prepared to execute that response. The objective of the action (i.e., elimination of the current North Korean regime and a forcible dismantling of the North Korean nuclear program) should be clearly conveyed to the North Korean government. In order to be a

credible threat, there must continue to be a robust U.S. presence in South Korea and Japan. The TCOG must improve its intelligence programs to act both as the indicator of the necessity of military action, and as an enabler of the effort to interdict export of North Korean nuclear technology. Pending North Korean acceptance of IAEA inspectors, the TCOG with China and Russia in particular, and the world community in general, must aggressively execute an interdiction campaign designed to eliminate the flow of nuclear material from North Korea.

Conclusion

The enormity of the potential threat from a nuclear North Korea provides our regional friends and allies' incentive to strengthen their relationship with the United States. And although the military option alone would succeed in achieving the stated political objectives of the TCOG, it would be akin to the doctor killing the patient to treat the disease. We have the opportunity to take advantage of recently opened South Korean and Japanese lines of communication with the Kim Jung-il regime. Additionally, recent North Korean overtures to Russia and China present the United States with opportunities to influence the North Korean regime indirectly through their traditional benefactors.

The three-part policy of aggressive diplomacy, conditional and unconditional engagement, and containment allow the United States to exploit our opportunities while having a military option in reserve. The diplomatic objective would be to articulate and reinforce the resolve and expectations of the international community regarding North Korean nuclear weapons. The engagement piece would allow survival options for the North Korean government while requiring it to show some good faith in the process, something sadly lacking in the past. Finally the containment portion strives to preserve a military option if the North Korean threat appears to be escalating beyond an acceptable TCOG boundary, while increasing the opportunity

to interdict illegal North Korean export of nuclear technology. This multilateral, multifaceted approach by the United States and our allies employs each member's strengths while trying to minimize weaknesses, and maximizes the possibility of influencing North Korean policy regarding their nuclear weapons program.

Notes

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